

**Choice of Reading Tools: Hardcopy or Softcopy**Nazrul Islam<sup>1</sup>, Md. Maruf Billah<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Lecturer & Head, Department of English, German University Bangladesh<sup>2</sup>Lecturer, Department of English, German University Bangladesh**Corresponding Author:** Nazrul Islam, E-mail: [nazrulasia@gmail.com](mailto:nazrulasia@gmail.com)**ARTICLE INFO**

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**KEYWORDS***Softcopy, Hardcopy,  
Smartphone, Health Hazard,  
Reading Tools***ABSTRACT**

Due to technological innovations, nowadays, reading tools are being changed drastically. This study reports on a small-scale research study conducted to investigate that a large number of readers are switching their reading tools from hard copies to soft copies. This study has been conducted upon the readers of different ages and professions mostly students. The respondents are mainly students of a private university and two colleges in Bangladesh. A pre-tested questionnaire was prepared to conduct the survey. The results show that nearly 60% people read Word File in computer or in other devices. There are people who read in printed documents and they are around 40%. It also shows that 34% people use computer for reading, most of the people access reading through their smart phones and the percentage of it is 56. Majority of our surveyed people read their academic texts that are in percent 60. In response to questions, whether has social media affected reading habit greatly or not, the majority of our participants responded "Strongly Agree" and its rate is nearly 70%. Among the young generation tendency of soft copy is higher

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Reading is the second most ancient media that enables human head towards the civilization. Even before the invention of printed books or other staffs people used to read from different sources. Writing shows us the way of civilization and reading helps to make it happen. For the time being, like other human behaviors reading habit has also gone through huge changes. Against the emergence of rapidly changing technology and human needs, reading however introduces us with different habits or ways. Research around the world shows the importance of reading as a means foster curious minds; therefore, students should not only be trained in the professional field but also as thinking and reflective beings (Rodriguez, 2007). The evolution of reading habits is a process of socialization, based on different learning contexts (school, college, university, corporate or in job field).

**1.1 READING**

Reading in general is a function of being able to comprehend, understand, make sense and finally to interpret written letters and symbols. Aina Et Al. (2011) commented that reading can be described as a process of perceiving the representation of symbols

that are printed and written by looking at them, identifying them and usually verbalization of these ocular signs. It includes a mental formulation of communication that creates sounds in human speech. Similarly, Shen (2006) describes reading habits, as how much, how often and what people read actually. Again, reading is a number of interactive processes between the reader and the text, in which readers use their knowledge to build, to create, and to construct meaning.

**1.2. READING TOOLS****1.2. a. SOFTCOPY**

A soft copy (sometimes spelled "softcopy") is an electronic copy of some type of data, such as a file viewed on a computer's display or transmitted as an e-mail attachment. Such as PDF, E-book, Word file etc. To buy a new book one needs to go to the market then to search for it shop to shop. But the modern technological advancement has lessened this hassle with the help of multiple digital tools. Readers nowadays spend much of their time on screens like computer, smartphone, tablet etc. All they seek get within a moment by a single click. There are numerous reasons for why the use softcopy is widely spreading. It is more expedient to read on screens than to carry a printed book in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Bookstores are now getting closed in European

countries. In this way in near future the world will reduce the use of printed materials.

### 1.2. b. **HARDCOPY**

In information handling, the U.S. Federal Standard 1037C (Glossary of Telecommunication Terms) defines a hard copy as a permanent reproduction, or copy, in the form of a physical object, of any media suitable for direct use by a person (in particular paper), of displayed or transmitted data. Examples of hard copy include teleprinter pages, continuous printed tapes, computer printouts, and radio photo prints.

It is not so many years when people had no other choice but to look for printed books. Library was then the only richest information gem of mankind's knowledge and cultural wealth. Now that library is also making difference in its accession as people can access them with a single click only. This is simply a touch how technology is bringing changes in our reading habits. The worldwide use of computers, smart phones and internet as well as different kinds of databases have furnished sound opportunities for the survival and evolution of traditional libraries of various types. For instance, instead of searching the shelves, we can firmly reserve the book we want online, before picking it up in person. This clinically saves a lot of time. The digital libraries nowadays provide their members with opportunities to borrow e-books and get online access to their database. So, libraries that deny adapting the emerging technology face the risk of being outdated. Digitalization at the same time brought a huge dimension in the classroom activities. Smart boards are replacing the traditional blackboards which are allowing the use of virtual materials too.

Using physical books, pens and paper are nowadays losing their importance. People now prefer carrying tablets, mobile phones or laptops to printed books and notebooks by what they are much more privileged of having hundreds of books and also allowing them to take notes at the same time. Besides, devices are also helping them to watch instructive videos which are extremely effective in learning their respective issues.

Apart from the academic sectors, free reading activities are also being affected by the advanced technology. Pew Research Center reported, the number of e-reader users in the U.S. has jumped to 28 percent in 2016 which was only 17 percent in 2011. Reading is an indivisible and comprehensive process (Sole, 2006; 19) as well as strategic (Carlino, 2006: 68). Number of authors opine that reading is an important tool for knowledge transfer. In this regard,

the habit of reading is an academic activity that enhances skills in reading techniques. A study in Mexico recently finds that people read more during their school life than in other levels (e.g Sep, 2008:8).

## 2. **RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

The hypotheses to be tested under this study are as following:

- a) Readers are switching from traditional hard copy to soft copy as a reading tool.
- b) Technology is the sole agent to transform change of reading tool
- c) Young generation is more interested to soft copy comparison to soft copy.

## 3. **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Advancement of technology is reshaping our lifestyle our reading habit and reading tools as well. This interests me to make an in-depth study on this field. The objectives of this study are as follows:

- a) To determine that a majority of people have changed their reading tools.
- b) To determine that modern technology has led readers' choice to soft copy.
- c) To determine that young generation is more interested to soft copy.
- d) To determine that people think of health hazard while they use digital tools.
- e) To determine that social media has a major role play in reading habit.
- f) To add new insight to the existing literature on readers choice on reading tools

## 4. **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Reading is always a sustaining medium of acquisition. Mostly it is needed in learning a second language. It won't be unwise saying the modern civilization were beyond imagination if we couldn't read. Reading directs us towards civilization. Francis Bacon thus asserts "Reading maketh a full man."(1597:1612)

For students to pass their courses with success, they must invest at least three hours a week in each course, but findings show that students invest less than expected of them; they consider reading "a luxury." Brief texts are popular ("It was too long - didn't read it"). Students feel that they don't have enough time to read, and reading is slow (Sheorey & Mokhtari, 1994).

Web-based resources are the main sources used for study – and students generally do not apply any skills of discretion or judge the quality of the materials (Yaakov & Shor, 2010). In a study on reading habits by Pundak, HersHKovitz, and Shacham (2010), the authors find that students in basic science courses in

colleges and universities rarely read their textbooks before the lectures. Students find it difficult to cope with their numerous academic assignments. This study displayed that most students are not interested in reading their textbooks to expand the horizon of their knowledge of the theories that underlie their studies; Textbooks are used mainly to assist them in solving exercises and problems.

Findings of a study in Bangladesh (Akanda, Hoq, & Hasan, 2013) indicate that reading is related to learning and learning leads to mental, professional, and human development in general. Collins and Cheek (1999) portray reading as a process that requires the use of complex thought processes to interpret printed symbols as meaningful units and comprehend them as thought unit for the understanding of a printed message. Just a decade ago, students had no other choice but to carry books or other printed documents with them. It was usually seen then people reading printed newspaper at bus stops, railway stations or at working places. This is to keep themselves up to date with the current trends, knowledge and for awareness. Besides it helps them develop the reading skill. However, for the time being, there have been an alarming observation regarding the reading habits of the emerging youths across the world.

Children, who miss the opportunity of getting in touch with books in their early stages of life, find it hard to acquire good reading habits in their later years (Deavers, 2000). Reading habits, therefore, play a very crucial role in enabling a person to achieve practical efficiency. "Laws die but books never." Indeed, books are the most suitable medium through which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation (Issa et al, 2012).

Gallo (2007) said "books, yield their best to you, if you read them at the age at which each particular masterpiece can ideally be chewed and digested". There is little knowledge about the everyday reading practices of tertiary education students and how these practices affect their academic achievement.

Everyday reading consists of individuals' reading activities for a variety of purposes, such as for relaxation or information (Issa. et al, 2012). Guthrie, Benneth & McGough, (2007) believe that "reading" is the act of getting meaning from printed or written words, which is the basis for learning and one of the most important skills in everyday life. Comprehension skills help the learner to understand the meaning of words in isolation and in context (Palani, 2012). He believes reading is a process of

thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning and problem solving.

In a similar study by Molina (2005: 6) it was concluded that there is a close relationship between student achievement and the love of reading, judged on the basis of reading habits. While doing an investigation Bobda (2011) finds the reading habits of some postgraduate high school student-teachers in Yaounde stated that the lack of reading in Africa and specifically in Cameroun is a phenomenon often decried in popular opinion. John P Robinson (1980) presents a study of adult reading habits based on time use that indicates a decline in daily newspaper readership, most significantly in the past 10 years.

## 5. METHODOLOGY

### 5.1 The Subjects

This survey covers 100 participants, among them 56 females and 44 males. Majority of the participants were between age 15 and 40; 70% were between age 15 and 30 and the rest were older than 35 years. The participating students were from a private university, a college and school. Some officials were also included in this survey.

### 5.2 Methods and Procedure:

Survey was conducted during class time going to different institutions; university, college and school. 10 minutes were requested from their teacher on duty for the completion of the survey. At first, the purpose, objective and application method were explained, then a selection was done to whom the questionnaire and instructions were provided on how to fill it in. At the second step, participants were given time to answer the questions, after which the data was collected and finally all the participants were thanked for their honest feedback and cooperation.

## 6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The very first research question confirms participants' age. It shows the percentage of the participants' age as followed:

**Figure-1** shows the percentage that most of the participants 55% were aged between 15 to 30 years and they are marked here "young aged". The middle-aged people's engagement rate is 30%. And the least were the older people who were 15% of the total participants. Based on the age categories later in the research work there we will get a vivid idea on the particular group of people.

**Figure-2** marks the time respondents usually spend on reading. There are some people who read less than

1 hour-here 7.5% students read less than 1hour, 50% of the professionals are in less than 1hour reading category and 60% of the others who are aged over 40 are higher in this number. Later in 1-4 hours, the students are top in number, it is 35.75%. Again the 3<sup>rd</sup> chart displays people who read 5 to 8 hours and here the students again are much in number. 30% students spend 5-8 hours in reading. Lastly there are 37% students they read more than 9 hours a day. So, according to the results above students in general spend much time on reading.

**Figure-3** displays the ratio of the tools that are used by the participants. Nearly 60% people read Word File in computer or in other devices. There are people who read in printed documents and they are around 40%. Then the number of PDF readers in screen is slightly much 65%. Some people do print that PDF to read and its rate is nearly 35%. However, the number of Printed Material users is about 67% as the survey covers a good number of students from below the tertiary level. Besides the number of soft copy readers are seen significantly in the HTML view. This is mainly web page readers and their number are more than 60%. So, Softcopy readers are higher in number.

In **figure 4**, the pie chart shows the devices that are used mostly by the surveyed people. It tells 34% people use computer for reading. Next most of the people access reading through their smart phones and the percentage of it is 56. At the same time 8% people read on their Tablet Pc. And rest 2% read through other devices.

This information indicates that the availability of Smart Phone has highly influenced the generation to switch their reading tool from hard copy to softcopy. After that 5% people like to read different fictions. And rest of the persons are involved in other readings. In the meantime, people who are in between 40 or up they are much slow in switching them towards modern devices. Technologies they often find difficult or not actually willing to accept. Rather they prefer reading in printed paper.

In **figure 5**, there is a clear indication what people do choose to read? There we find 30% people read newspaper. Majority of our surveyed people read their academic texts that are in percent 60.

This is because earlier in our first graph we have showed that most of our attendants were students. Therefore, the reading issue has vastly covered by the reading of Academic Texts. Next to it the number of Newspaper Readers are much in number and the middle-aged people participated in our survey mostly

spend their time in reading Newspaper. Here we get a social image on readers' interest based on their ages.

**Figure-6** portrays a social picture by answering the question; have social media affected reading habit greatly? There were four options to choose their answer. Here the majority of our participants responded "Strongly Agree" and its rate is nearly 70%. Then 15% participants marked it "Somewhat Agree". About 6% mentioned it "Strongly Disagree" and the rest 9% took it as "Somewhat Disagree". Therefore, no doubt social media have greatly affected our reading habit as we find in this question.

In **figure-7**, a question regarding readers' consideration of softcopy as problematic thinking of health hazard was asked for response. There we find almost the same answer "Strongly Agree" that is about 75% of the participants. 15% of the participants argued it "Somewhat Agree" and the rest of the people remained themselves neutral. The chart above however displays the scenario to its proportionate rate.

At last the paper included an open space for the participants' individual opinion on how to improve reading tools or if they have any comments regarding this survey. In comparison to the older people, the young participants argued for the availability of the smart technologies. On the contrary, older people refused to do that as it consumes much time by deviating its users. They rather insisted on making texts and other documents more user-friendly.

In response to the last question regarding their opinion for the improvement of reading tools most of them left the space blank. Few commented that there should be technology which will not be harmful for health, especially eyes. Some also desired for more user-friendly technology for educational purpose. Moreover, there were a couple of comments regarding the availability of devices in their classrooms or working places.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The study sought to ascertain readers' choice of reading tools, the shifting nature from hardcopy to softcopy. The respondents were of different age groups, mostly students of colleges and university. The study reveals that most of the surveyed people use softcopy and their percentage is 60%, and 40% people use hardcopy. Among the older respondents aged between 40 and 60, 7.5% persons read less than one hour daily. Besides, 50% of them just go through the major points of their particular issue. Then between 1 to 4 hours 7.5% people read extensively whereas 35.75% are strategic in their reading. . Among the softcopy users nearly 60% people read Word File in computer or in other devices. There are

people who read in printed documents and they are around 40%. Then the number of PDF readers in screen is slightly much 65%. Next most of the people access reading through their smart phones and the percentage of it is 56. At the same time 8% people read on their Tablet Pc. And rest 2% read through other devices. 70% people ‘strongly Agree’ that social media has a strong role for changing reading tools.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

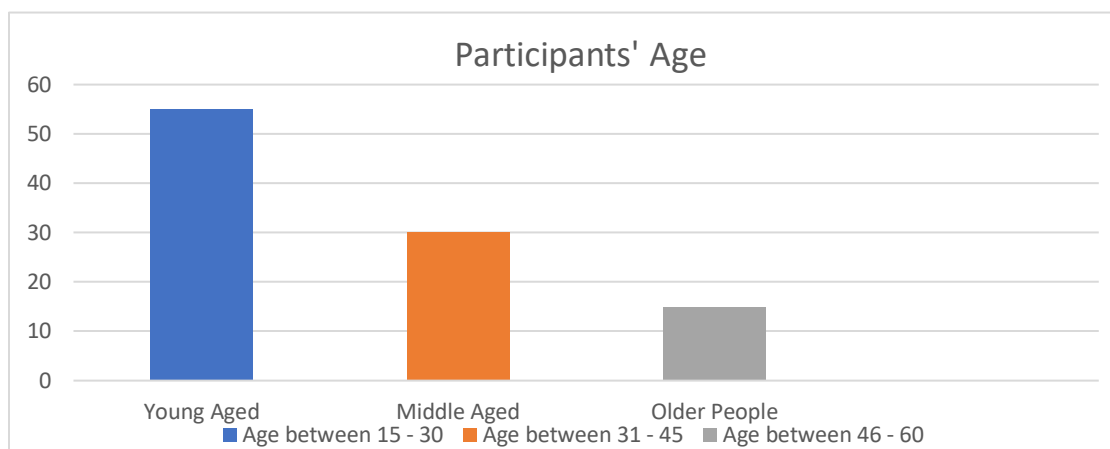
**Nazrul Islam**, a Bangladeshi born researcher, received his undergraduate degree in English Language & Literature, and graduate degree in English Literature from Northern University Bangladesh with CGPA 3.91 & 3.92 respectively. His research interest includes Creative Writing,

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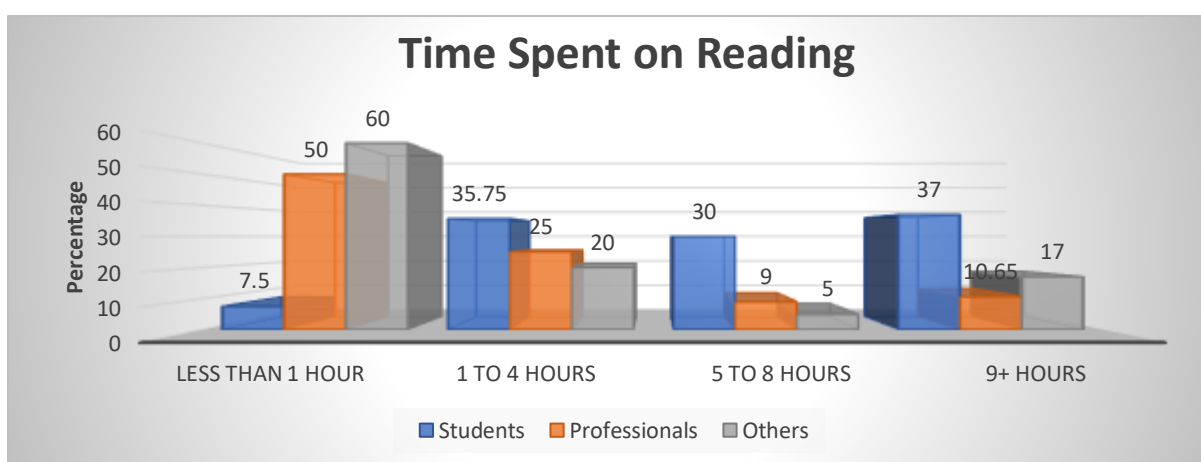
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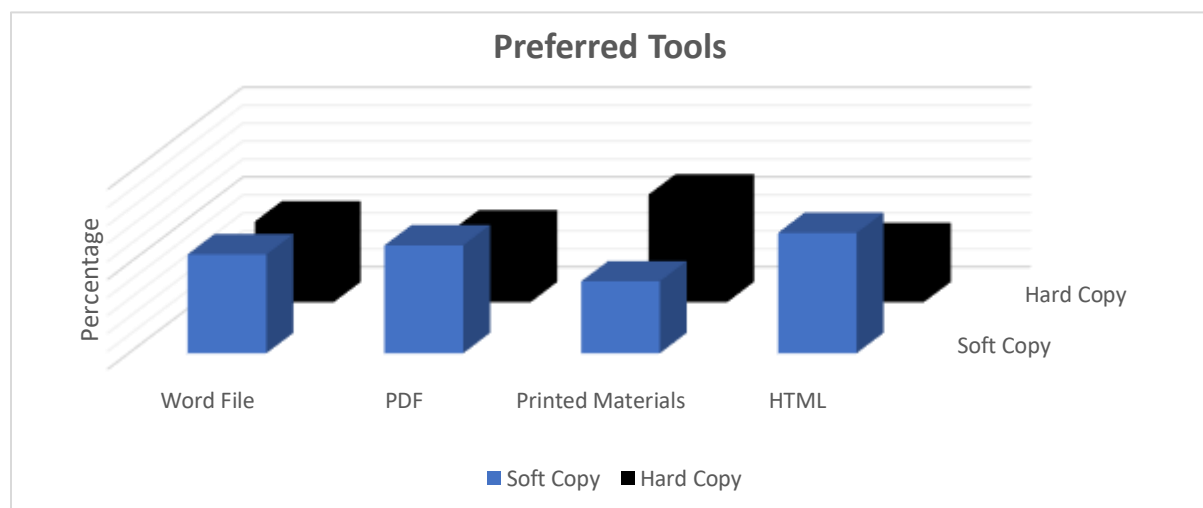
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**Figure 1: Attendants' Age**



**Figure 2: Time Spent on Reading**



**Figure 3: Frequently Used Tools**

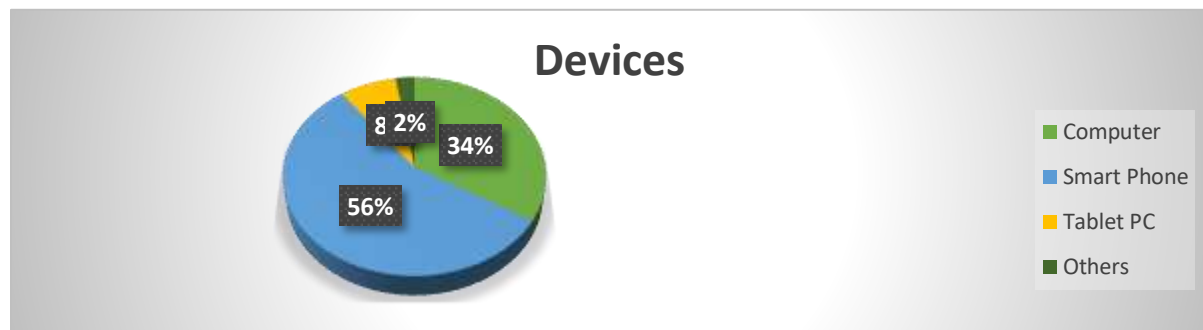


Figure 4: Devices for Reading

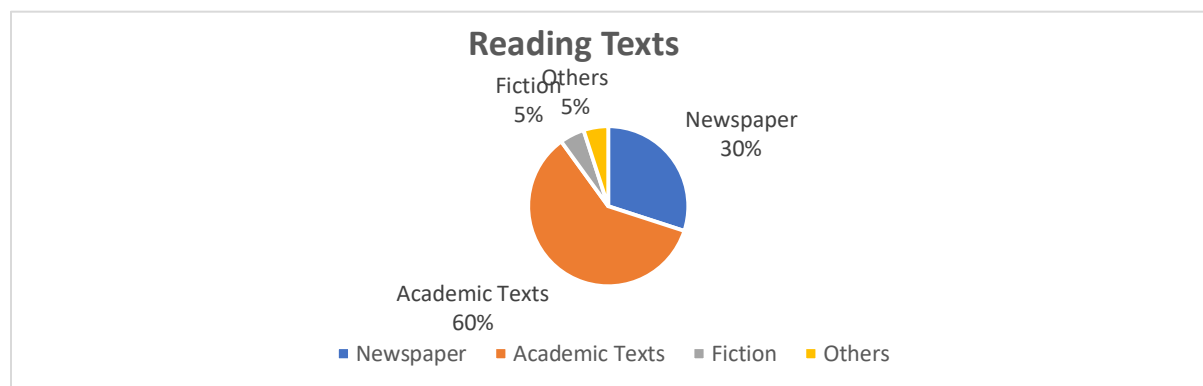


Figure 5: Reading Interests

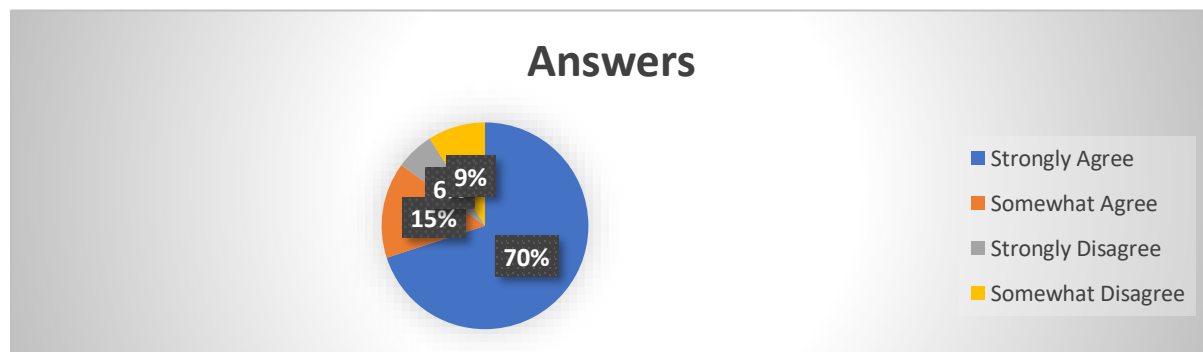
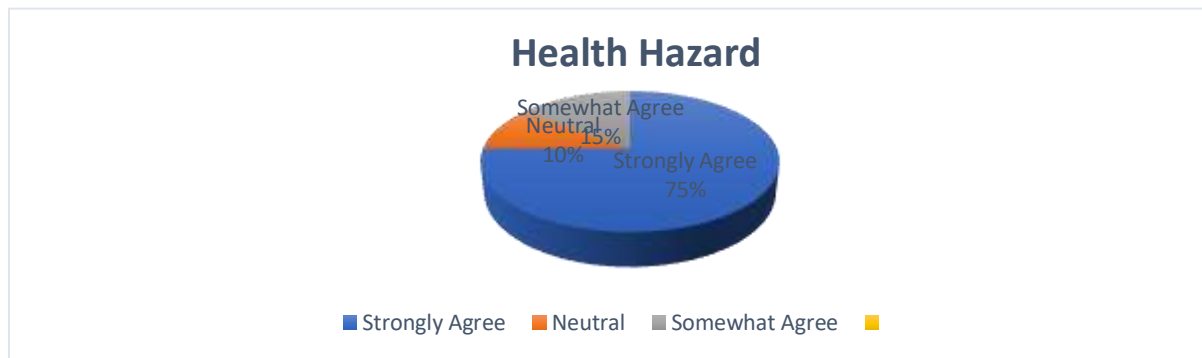


Figure 6: Participants' Opinion



**Figure 7: Health Hazard of Softcopy**